

'Exemplary Service'

Excellent customer service and high-quality products have been key to Charlie's Pride Meats. The firm is celebrating its 40th anniversary. **By Libby John**



>> Charlie's Pride Meats sells oven-roasted roast beef, pastrami, corned beef and pot roast, as well as pre-sliced foodservice items such as ham, turkey and roast beef.

After outgrowing its latest facility, Los Angeles-based Charlie's Pride Meats is moving into a new, 40,000-plus-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility this spring. This significant step is a part of the company's 40th anniversary celebration, CEO Jim Dickman says.

The company sells oven-roasted roast beef, pastrami, corned beef and pot roast; pre-sliced foodservice items such as premium ham and turkey and roast beef; and pre-cooked retail and food entrees.

The new facility allows the company to combine its two current facilities, and gives it new space such as a cold storage facility and clean rooms for sliced items. The new facility is twice as big as its old ones. "We have more room to spread out," he adds. "Before, we were quite challenged to grow, given our space considerations."

The added space will also enable the company to grow, Dickman adds. Its Los Angeles headquarters is its only production location, but it has sales rep-

resentatives in Wisconsin, Florida, Maryland, Arizona, Washington, Oregon and California, as well as a well-organized national broker network. "We do sell to most of the country, but now, we have an even greater capacity," he says. "We hired on three new sales representatives so we can continue our sales growth and continue to meet the needs of our expanding customer base."

A Family Firm

Dickman's father, Charles Dickman, founded the company in 1969. "He worked very hard and always with integrity to build the business," Jim Dickman says.

company profile

Charlie's Pride Meats

www.cpmhotline.com

2009 projected sales: \$85 million

Headquarters: Los Angeles

Employees: 129

Products: Deli meat

Jim Dickman, CEO: "We will come up with new ideas and food concepts to keep them interested in purchasing."

"True entrepreneurs, [Charles Dickman and his wife Micky Dickman] believe in family values, hard work, honesty and in providing products and service at the very best price," the company stresses. "That legacy lives on today."

"In our recipe for success, the most important ingredient is quality – and we make sure it's included in everything we do," Charles Dickman said.

Jim Dickman has worked for Charlie's Pride Meats since he was in high school, he says. He came on full-time in 1980 after graduating from the University of California in Los Angeles. Today, he is an owner of the company, along with his father and President and Sales Manager Robert Dickman, his brother.

"Robert travels extensively to develop quality relationships with our existing and potential new customers," Jim Dickman says. "Robert works with our

broker network throughout the country to develop business."

Focused on Customer Service

The foodservice market has changed significantly since he joined, Jim Dickman says. For example, the company's customer base used to be comprised of mom-and-pop stores and today, it's mostly large regional chains or international corporations. "There has been quite a big consolidation," he says. "Years ago, there were more individual players. Now, [customers are] much larger.

"Even though there has been a great consolidation within the food business, there are ample opportunities for an entrepreneurial company like Charlie's Pride to provide many unique products, services and ideas to multinationals to keep our business humming far into the future," Dickman adds.

The company prides itself for provid-

ing the best combination of quality, consistency and competitive pricing. "We give exemplary service," Dickman says. "We coddle all our accounts. We provide superior service and keep new ideas in front of them. We constantly strive to bring our costs down so we can pass on the savings to our customer."

That will be easier now since the company's new facility includes a test kitchen, he adds. "We will be able to come up with many new ideas and food concepts to keep them interested in purchasing and expanding what they're buying from us today," he says.

The industry is also more regulated, Dickman says.

"The USDA really watches everyone carefully," he explains. "Regulations are very stringent. [Today] it would be difficult to start a brand new [manufacturing company] because of all the bureaucracy. Forty

charlie's pride meats



>> Charlie's Pride Meats provides quality, competitive pricing and consistency, CEO Jim Dickman says. The company emphasizes R&D to ensure quality and integrity in its products, and its owner and plant managers consistently work to improve taste and consistency. Also, its new 40,000-plus-square-foot facility includes a test kitchen, which will enable the firm to cook up new items and concepts for its customers.



years ago, it wasn't easy, but there were far fewer regulations."

The company's plant managers and owners work to improve the taste, quality and consistency of the products. "We quickly make changes when needed and we are able to get new products and/or concepts to our customers quickly," Dickman says.

The company emphasizes R&D to ensure quality and integrity in its products and to improve its product lines. "[Our] computer-monitored smokehouses give precise control over internal cooking temperatures of meats, sealing in juices and making roast beef that looks and tastes as if it came right out of a home oven," the company says.

"[Our] service oriented sales team is constantly being trained in all aspects of the business, including all food safety issues. Most of all, [we have] honed [our] ability to custom-fit the requirements of each valued customer."

'An Invested Interest'

"We constantly promote with our customers in a variety of manners," Dickman says. "We treat each customer with respect and integrity and design advertising around their needs.

"Our customers deserve the very best and we, as a team, strive to exceed their expectations," he adds. "When they say jump, we say 'how high?'"

Being a family owned company has given it an advantage over its corporate competitors, Dickman says. "Our quality control and our outlook is different," he says. "Because we are family-owned, we have an invested interested in every phase [of the operation]."

Growth will be the focus of the company going forward, Dickman says. "Because we have a new building, we can grow with larger restaurants, food-service chains, supermarkets and big box [retailers]," he says. "We intend to keep introducing new and exciting products to the marketplace that the consumer will appreciate and that brings them true value." **FD**